

Congresswoman Betty McCollum
McGovern Amendment to Reduce Military Aid to Colombia by \$100 Million
June 28, 2005

Mr. Chair, the McGovern Amendment to cut \$100 million from Plan Colombia is about accountability and sending a message that cutting deals with narcotics traffickers who pose as politicians will not be tolerated by the American tax payer.

After six years and over \$4 billion dollars, Plan Colombia is not reducing the supply of cocaine on our streets, but has succeeded in making cocaine in America cheaper, more available and more potent than ever before.

The drug war in Colombia is failing – failing the people of Colombia and the American taxpayer. Spending another \$735 million to stay the wrong course and continue to finance failure is irresponsible. Let us send a message to Colombia that there are no more blank checks in American taxpayers' checkbook.

Unfortunately, Plan Colombia has not made the Colombian people any safer. More than 2 million Colombians have been forced to flee their homes, 90% of violent crimes – murders and rapes – go unpunished, and human rights abuses among Colombia's military and law enforcement are all too common.

These are deeply disturbing trends. There is cheaper cocaine on America's streets, millions of innocent people fleeing for their lives, and lawlessness. This is hardly what we could call "good governance." In return for the narco-terrorism and corruption, the American taxpayers are being asked to reward the Colombian government.

Now, a law passed by Colombia's Congress and supported by President Uribe provides immunity and protection for right-wing death squads and narco-terrorists. For ending their participation in death squads, Colombia will be giving virtual immunity and protection from extradition to narco-traffickers, many under indictment in the United States.

One paramilitary death squad, the AUC earns 70% of its income from narcotics trafficking and the AUC is listed as an official terrorist organization by the U.S. Government. The AUC's leader, Diego Murillo, is described as a "brutal paramilitary warlord who made a fortune in the drug trade."

Under the plan for disarmament supported by our allies in Bogotá, Murillo and terrorists like him who have committed massacres, kidnappings, drug trafficking and the murders of elected officials receive freedom from prosecution – and keep possession of their riches.

In Colombia, if crime pays, if drug trafficking pays and if terrorism pays – let's not have the American tax payer pay for it. Congress needs to cut funding for Plan Colombia – save the American taxpayers \$100 million and send a message that Colombia cannot protect narco-terrorists with our tax dollars. I strongly urge my colleagues to support the McGovern Amendment.